

VZCZCXRO8387  
PP RUEHGH RUEHVC  
DE RUEHCN #0219/01 2250552  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P R 130552Z AUG 07  
FM AMCONSUL CHENGDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2588  
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 3145

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHENGDU 000219

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM, G, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/13/2032

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TENSIONS SPREADING FROM TIBETAN TOWN OF LITANG?; ANOTHER  
CLASH ON THE PLATEAU

REF: A) CHENGDU 210        B) CHENGDU 206        C) CHENGDU 195

CHENGDU 00000219 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: James A. Boughner, Consul General, U.S. Consulate  
General, Chengdu.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Although local officials may be keen for it not to affect the tourist trade, tensions remain high in the town of Litang in the west of China's Sichuan Province following the arrest of Runggye Adak, a Tibetan nomad who publicly called for the return of the Dalai Lama. Roadblocks are in place and a curfew imposed following rioting that may have resulted in the torching of a police station. It is also possible the incident is rippling out into other Tibetan areas of western Sichuan where pictures of the Dalai Lama and Gendun Choekyi Nyima -- the Panchen Lama designated by the Dalai Lama -- are being displayed openly. Meanwhile in southern Qinghai Province, People's Armed Police (PAP) forces were called out on August 7 to put an end to a violent clash that broke out between ethnic Tibetan and Muslim Hui Chinese. End Summary.

¶2. (C) A foreign national contact, who just returned to Chengdu after spending approximately one month in ethnic Tibetan areas of western Sichuan, told CG August 10 that local security officials have apparently still not fully brought under control demonstrations sparked by the arrest of a Tibetan nomad who publicly called for the return of the Dalai Lama during August 1 opening ceremonies of a traditional horse racing festival in the town of Litang (refs a and b). According to the contact, the "sincerity and courage" displayed by the relatively elderly man, Runggye Adak, resonated immediately with festival attendees that included many young Khampa -- ethnic Tibetans from the area of Kham historically known for producing fierce nomadic warriors -- who had traveled to Litang for the racing. Our contact noted it is unclear which specific clan Runggye Adak is from. What is clear, however, is that his actions and subsequent arrest has galvanized Khampa regardless of clan.

¶3. (C) Although not aware of any deaths or arrests of individuals other than Runggye Adak, our contact said several days of rioting ensued following Runggye Adak's detention. Our contact had heard that the police station in Litang to which Runggye Adak had been taken may have been overrun and set on fire by an angry local crowd of over 500 people. At that point, however, Runggye Adak had already been moved to a prison approximately two hours west of the prefecture capital of Kangding where he currently remains. Some shops in Litang were also attacked.

14. (C) People's Armed Police (PAP), according to our contact, are deployed in force throughout Litang and have established four roadblocks to try to control access to the town. PAP continue for some reason, however, to allow tourist buses in and out of the area. Our contact speculated that local officials may not want to cut off lucrative tourist revenue during what is the peak season. While a nighttime curfew in Litang remains in effect, the presence of tourists, both Han Chinese and foreigners, may also be serving to restrain to a certain extent imposition of strict security measures.

15. (C) Our contact observed that government officials may be trying to avoid an overly strong response in Litang that could lead to unrest spreading to other areas. The contact indicated that pictures of the Dalai Lama and Gendun Choekyi Nyima are now being displayed openly in western Sichuan. Before his arrest, Runggye Adak had also called for the Chinese Government to recognize Gendun Choekyi Nyima as the true Panchen Lama and release him from house arrest.

-----  
Meanwhile in Qinghai...  
-----

16. (C) Other Congen contacts confirmed a violent incident occurred August 7 between ethnic Tibetan and Muslim Hui Chinese in Maqin (Tb: Machen) County of the Guoluo (Golog) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Qinghai Province. Local Tibetans reportedly attacked and beat Hui in the county and destroyed a number of Hui-owned shops and restaurants following a dispute over sanitary conditions at a Hui restaurant. (Note: our contacts could not confirm a Radio Free Asia report that a local mosque had also been destroyed. End note). When PAP forces intervened, the Tibetans turned their anger on the PAP. A number of Tibetans and at least seven Chinese police officers were injured in the ensuing melee. PAP remain on high alert and are out in force in Maqin. Separately in Qinghai, according to a reliable contact, a number of monks were recently arrested in (Gande) nearby Gapde County, possibly for involvement in the

CHENGDU 00000219 002.2 OF 002

above incident.

-----  
Comments  
-----

17. (C) If it appears that tensions from Litang might spread to other Tibetan areas, Post assumes a more vigorous response from local security officials would not be far away. Tibetan/Hui clashes reflect competition over economic resources rather than religious differences. More Muslim Hui are pushing into traditionally Tibetan areas to take advantage of construction and service sector jobs and Hui are viewed somewhat as "carpet baggers" by the Tibetans. Desertification in Ningxia, Gansu, and Xinjiang is also reportedly causing more Hui to move onto the Plateau, as is the rising price of caterpillar fungus "chong cao," valued as a medicinal herb. The latest export price this week for good quality "chong cao" is RMB 280,000 a kilo (or over USD 35,000).

BOUGHNER